1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

853 grandmother, by name Mishidohi, who had an adult son and had had no other child since, prepared light beer and other appropriate food and succeeded in secreting milk in her own breast ; so the child was saved !

856 826 A child during these first months of its existence is regarded as a very weak creature. "I mati !" i. e. "It is nothing but water !" Hence perhaps the curious idea that a baby, just like a new born animal, is able to swim, at any rate it cannot be drowned : it floats on the water. When a woman carrying a little child on her back crosses a river and is in danger of being swept away by the stream, people shout to her from the shore : "Untie the 'ntehe' and let the baby cross. Think of yourself, the little one will follow all right." They say: "Psa yila, it is taboo that a baby should sink." Note the curious use of the word "yila" in this sentence.

3) Dentition.

856 364 351 As soon as the child has cut the two lower and upper incisors, the mother takes a white bead (tjambu) and ties it to one of the child's hairs above the forehead. This white bead is said to help the other teeth to come out normally. If this precaution were not taken, the child would not become intelligent ; he would shiver instead of smiling ; he would bring forward his lips and his tongue to prevent the air from getting into his mouth ! When all the teeth are duly cut, the bead is removed and thrown away *talen*, viz. on the *tala*. The *tala* is the ash-heap, the place behind the hut on which everyone throws ashes and dirt. It plays a great part in the customs of the Thongas and other South African Bantus.

195 The teeth (tinyó-menyo) of the children are called figuratively *hobe*. The *hobe* (pl. *tihobe*) means the grain of pounded maize which is white and very similar to a tooth. Hence the expression : "A humi hobe," "he has got out a grain of maize," employed to indicate the cutting of the teeth.

787 766 856 When a child cuts his upper teeth first, it is a bad omen. In the Northern clans and especially amongst the Ba-Pedi, it is a great taboo. At his death the child must be buried in wet soil.

1) THE CUSTOM OF THE EROTIC DREAM (Tilorela).

881 When a young man has noticed for the first time an emissio
195 seminis, he is said to have become an adult (a kulile, a thombile)
751 to have "drunk the nkanye." The nkanye is the tree from which the bukanye is made. It is prepared for the great feast of the new year. *To drink the nkanye* is an euphemism to designate the entrance into a new phase of life, into the age of puberty. According to Mboza, the lad must go early in the morning to wash his body, and that is all. But Tobane says that, in the Mpfumo clan, the family doctor is called; in a broken pot, he roasts pieces of skin of all the beasts of the veldt, together with some half digested grass taken from the stomach of a goat (psanyi). The boy must eat a little of this medicine and rub all his joints with it. This will strengthen him so that, when he has relations with girls, he will not be overcome (gemiwa) by them. This rite, which is very similar to the rite of the broken pot performed for infants, is connected with the "gangisa," the sexual habits of young people which begin at the time of puberty, as we shall see later on.

881 At this time also, the boy begins to wear the very primitive
291 clothing called *shifado* (sha ku siba, the thing with which one
177 closes, see Annotatio 1). In former times they wore only the *mbayi*,
789 a small cylindrical or conical object of woven palm leaves, which
832 was the national dress of the Thongas; the *shifado* seems to be of Zulu origin. It is very much valued as preventing contact with the earth, as a protection against ants and an aid to continence; the lads who do not wear it are blamed and accused of being *ba-nato*. The word *nato* means a magical medicine by means of which men of low morals throw men or women into a deep sleep during the night, enter the huts of other people and commit adultery with their wives.

2) THE PIERCING OF THE EARS (Ku tjunya, (Ro.), boshela. (Dj.).

881 This also takes place at this period. There are two ways of
304 performing it, either by an actual piercing of the lower lobe
177 with a thorn, or by cutting it with a knife. The first method

1[See p. 516 In these categories or in 116 - Analyst]

832 576 593 152 572 Even a husband never kissed his wife. On coming back from a journey, a man would hardly greet his wife; she would see him passing through the village, prepare food for him, and when it was cooked, she would come and salute him by presenting it to him. But if he has a good friend in the village, and if this friend sees him coming back after a long absence, their meeting will be much more touching. The friend will go to the main entrance of the village, exclaim: "Ha-Ha," take his parcel from his hands, put his arms round his shoulders (a ku mu buso hi mandla), remove the perspiration from his face, and pat him gently, saying: "Your ancestor-gods have their eyes open! They have worked well! They have brought you back."

574 609 622 *Hospitality.* When strangers enter a village, men sit on the *bandla*, and women go further on and sit on the *hubo*; they remain quietly there till the people of the village come and salute them (losa). Should the inhabitants delay too long, the visitors move on, saying: "These people are not good." But this is very rare. Generally the master of the village comes to them, inquiring who they are, whence they come, where they are going, and asks them: "Do you wish to spend the night here?" If they say: "Yes," the headman will empty one of his huts by putting two of his wives together, and will himself sleep with the visitors. Should there still be food, he will give them some. If not, he says: 574 609 622 203 195 "*Ndlala*!" "Starvation!" After a little while, a mat is unrolled and the official ceremony of "djungulisana" takes place. This is a very amusing custom. The headman sits together with his hosts and enquires about the news of their home. One of the visitors begins in a monotonous tone and pours forth volubly a flow of words with a peculiar cadence and almost without taking breath. His interlocutor interrupts him after each sentence, with "Ahina, hina," that is to say "Indeed, indeed!" till the whole skein is unwound; the two men finish with a longer "*Hina*," the inhabitants of the hut adding an emphatic "*khani*," a heartfelt "thank you;" then the master of the village begins to relate his own news in the same tone. It is impossible to 574 609 imagine anything more curious than this "mélopée" in two parts. This law of hospitality is general all over the tribe. Should

and the Bantus, as a whole, deserve the compliment once paid to the pupils of the Lovedale Institute by the Rev. J. Henderson, when he said to them: "Your race has certainly received the gift of eloquence!" (1) 521 537

As regards the subject matter of their speeches, it does not always show much reflection, or many new ideas. Nor is there much order or sequence in their discourses. This would require proportion, measure, forethought, and all these virtues belong rather to the arithmetical sense which is so sadly deficient in the Bantu mind. What makes a Bantu address especially interesting is rather the *power of comparison* exhibited by Bantu speakers. They excel in discovering spiritual truths in material facts, or rather in perceiving the relations between the spiritual and the external world. This is one of the characteristics of the poetical faculty, and these so-called savages certainly have some sense of poetry in their minds. Most of the antithetic riddles, which will be quoted shortly, are instances of this power of comparison. When developed by proper training, this faculty will certainly become productive of valuable work. 195 537

So far, the training of Natives has been mostly in religious subjects, and I beg to give my readers some examples of their mode of comparison which I noted while listening to the preaching of evangelists, examples which bear the strong impress of the Bantu character. Sometimes the imagination is so subtle that the result is almost incoherent. They are satisfied even if the point which the two things compared have in common, that which grammarians call the "tertium comparationis," is almost infinitesimal.

(1) This power of elocution is very useful in Mission work, when evangelising the heathen villages all over Thongaland, the converts being always willing to make a speech or deliver an exhortation. They generally do this with great animation, and although the thinking is often poor, and does not show much sequence, they at least are never at a loss for words. I only once witnessed such a sad occurence! One of my pupils had prepared a sermon and was delivering it, when suddenly he stopped and could not proceed. He had lost the thread. Then a good natured smile appeared on his features and all his companions laughed heartily. This was the first time they had seen one of their countrymen in this predicament! The student had prepared a plan for his address, and had forgotten it! In former times plans were entirely absent and consequently there were no threads to lose!

For instance a Tembe Christian exhorting his hearers to fight against evil, says : 195 537

Let us, in this fight, take the shield which has been made from the skin of this ox slaughtered for our sake, Jesus Christ.

A moment of reflection is required to find the logical sequence which unites all these images. The Bantu shield being made of ox-hide, the scriptural image of the slaughtered lamb had to be transformed into that of an ox, for the sake of comparison!

Another evangelist, whose discourses were specially interesting because he was a master in this art, one day spoke for more than half an hour on the text "Charity which is the bond of perfection." In Thonga, bond, string, or rope is expressed by the same word (ngoti). So he showed how a string could be compared to charity by a great number of images, of which I remember at least the two following :

This rope, charity, is the rope which fastens the donkey to the trunk of a tree. In the evening you tie up the donkey ; it can graze the whole night all round the tree without any fear of being lost. So when we remain in connection with our Saviour, who is the tree, then we are happy and protected against all danger.

He evidently remembered the words of Christ : I am the vine. And he added :

Charity is the string, the string which ties up a parcel. You have many precious things in your parcel... But if you possess no string to tie up all these things, they will be lost on the way, one after the other, and you will reach the end of your journey (or of your life) having kept none of your spiritual advantages, etc.

This is how Simeon Gana tried to explain what conscience is :

Conscience resembles two companions who have made an arrangement to plunder, with impunity, another man's field of sweet potatoes. One of them climbs a tree, the other takes the hoe and digs up the potatoes. As soon as the owner of the field appears, the one on the tree whistles and the other promptly runs away, so that he is never

caught. But one day, the climber ran a thorn into his foot and he was obliged to sit down and extract it, as he could not climb to his post of observation in that condition. In the meantime his companion was stealing the potatoes in perfect tranquillity, thinking that his comrade was on guard. The owner arrived on the scene and caught him. Now you see clearly that conscience is the man who climbed up the tree. As long as he was doing his duty, success attended their plan. As soon as he fails to work, the man falls into disgrace. So let our conscience always be awake and warning us ! 195 537

We Europeans would never have dreamt of such a simile. Conscience represented by a thief helping another to steal! But the Bantu audience was perfectly satisfied...

Here is another comparison bearing on a similar subject :

The words of God are powerful and stir up the heart. They are like intestinal worms (manyokwana) which for a long time remain quiet in the body. But one fine night they awake and man cries out from pain, saying : "I am ill !" For years the man mocked the word of God, but that day he felt its power !

Hundreds of such comparisons, not always denoting a very refined taste, but always picturesque, might be collected from the addresses of Native Christians. I will only add this, which is deeper and more significant than many others, and which occurred to the imagination of one of my pupils :

We, preachers of the Gospel, are messengers of mourning. We have been sent to inform people of the great mourning of Jesus Christ by which He saved the world. Let us not resemble that messenger who had to go to another country to deliver his errand. On the way he passed a village where people were drinking beer. He heard the songs, looked on at the dance, entered and did not deliver his message. Such would we be, if distracted by worldly amusements, we were to neglect our sacred duty of preaching the cross.

Besides this undeniable power of comparison, Native addresses often reveal another curious feature ; the Native tendency to present ideas in a round-about manner. This is called *ku pamba*. Beneath expressions apparently simple they hide other meanings in a manner so ingenious and subtle that some of their hearers

often fail to understand them. This literary device is often apparent in their riddles, or proverbs. 195 537

The literary gifts of the Natives, finally, manifest themselves in the very interesting and rich folklore which will form the subject of our second chapter.

* * *

Is it possible after this rapid study of the Thonga language to fix with greater accuracy the place which the Bantu languages occupy in the historic development of human speech? Languages which are regarded as the most primitive are characterised by a linguistic phenomenon which is called holophrase, viz. a single word means not only a single action, but an action accomplished under a number of peculiar circumstances. Mr. Marett in his excellent little book entitled *Anthropology* (p. 140) quotes some very curious examples of holophrase borrowed from the American languages, especially from the Fuegian. A single expression is said to mean : "to look at each other hoping that either will offer to do something which both parties are unwilling to do." I have found in Thonga only one instance in which traces of the holophrase system might be found, and this is by no means so wonderful. The demonstrative adjectives are met with in three forms, which indicate not only the object referred to, but its place as regards distance and in relation to the person speaking. Tihomu *leti*, means these oxen, near at hand, near me ; tihomu *leto*, these oxen, somewhat further off, near you, my interlocutor ; tihomu *letiya*, those oxen, far away and near a third person. The more the final a is prolonged, the further off are the oxen. Moreover these demonstrative adjectives indicate not only the situation of the oxen in space but also in time ; *leti* are the oxen of to-day, *leto* those of a near past and *letiya* those of which we were speaking a long time ago. But this is an isolated case. In Thonga ideas are differenciated almost as completely as in our Indo-European languages. The language has evolved from the holophrastic to the analytic. My conclusion is therefore that the Bantu languages, though they belong to the agglutinate variety, have reached a high degree of development ; they reveal the existence of intellectual powers not essentially different from those of civilized races. They certainly constitute the greatest achievement of Bantu mental activity and the most precious treasure inherited by the Bantus of to-day from their forefathers. 192

1st Strophe.

533 They march in single file, the Elephants, the mighty ones,
224 They go to slake their thirst.
539

Antistrophe.

Let us go too! They're drinking amongst the thickets! Hurrah

2nd Strophe.

Hark! the smothered roarings in the forest.

Antistrophe.

'Tis a grand sound, the roaring in the forest. Hurrah!

3rd Strophe.

The crying of the elephant, the mother! 'Tis she who calls the hunters to the thickets.

Antistrophe.

Hurrah! 'tis she who calls the hunters! Ho! Hurrah!

4th Strophe.

Yonder's the one with ears so large and drooping.

Antistrophe.

Hurrah! the big-eared one has just passed us. Hurrah!

5th Strophe.

The boys are there; the sound of knives being sharpened, there from the spot where the elephant lies slain.

Antistrophe.

Hurrah! the sound of knives being sharpened. Hurrah!

This composition certainly exhibits wonderful poetic power and grandeur, describing marvellously the emotions of the courageous band, who have finally succeeded in obtaining the precious tusks of the elephant, and vast quantities of meat. This song of triumph is worthy of a place amongst the best productions of the Muse of primitive races.

195 To the imaginative mind of the Bantu everything that causes a deep impression, even material objects, affords an occasion for the utterance of lofty phrases and words of praise. Once when travelling south of Delagoa Bay through the desert, our party arrived in the neighbourhood of the Umbelozi railway. The

train was heard in the distance. One of my servants was busy cleaning the pots ; I heard him muttering the following words : 195

The one who roars in the distance... The one who crushes in pieces the braves and smashes them ! The one who debauches our wives : they abandon us, they go (to the towns to lead a bad life) ! The seducer ! And we remain alone.

He was extolling the huge thing and lamenting his misfortune and the curse it has brought upon the country.

IV. *Satiric poetry.*

I have already mentioned the peculiar custom of Thonga literati of speaking in a round-about fashion, and using figurative language, especially when they want to say something disagreeable or to give vent to their humour. It is but one step from such forms to satire. They generally indulge in this satiric vein when dealing with relatives-in-law, women being especially prone to it. When the sisters and aunts of a married woman go to pay a visit to her, they convey all kinds of equivocal compliments. These must not be taken seriously! It is a round-about — exceedingly round-about — way of making graceful allusions and expressing their mutual esteem. I will quote the series of these songs of friendly chaff and invective as it was given to me by Shigiyane, with a running commentary to render them comprehensible. These lively and pointed choruses give a fitting finishing-touch to the marriage customs, and illustrate the curious relations existing between allied families, which I explained in Vol. I, p. 249-253. 533 195 574 576 539

On the wedding day the women who take the bride to her husband sing the *tjeka song* : 585 533 539

Let us go with her, but let us go back to our homes!

This is an ironical way of saying : "She is going to find trouble : we won't follow her as far as that!." The same idea runs through all the songs which these women sing during the next few days.

784 3) A third kind of taboos are those I call *taboos of prevision*. Foresight is dangerous on certain occasions : Do not build your hut before you are married! (I. p. 251). Do not prepare the ntehe before the birth of your child (I. p. 46), nor your ngula basket before harvest! The travellers' taboos (I. p. 339) might also be included in this class.

4) A fourth category comprises the manifold *social taboos, viz.*, those actions which are prohibited because they would be dangerous to the social order. Exogamous laws (I. p. 256), hlonipha customs, viz., the tabooing of certain words by the chief (I. p. 384), and especially the curious taboos to be observed in the intercourse of allied families (I. p. 250), are social. The taboos connected with the moving of a village (I. p. 320) are physiological in so far as they are actuated by the fear of defilement, and social in so far as they aim at maintaining the life of the social organism, which is the *muti*. But those which chiefly bear the character of social taboos are those connected with the idea of *hierarchy*. We have met with them in the ceremonies of the first fruits (1) (I. p. 394) and in the rules of sowing: It is taboo to "precede" a chief or an elder brother in agricultural operations, sowing or harvesting!

5) This leads us to a fifth category : the *religious taboos*. The ancestor-gods, being the elders of the actual members of the family, must be treated as hierarchically superior ; hence the religious taboo of luma: the interdiction of eating the new crop before having presented the gods with the first fruits ; the prohibition of infringing the sacerdotal rights of an elder brother (p. 398) is a taboo of the same kind. We here observe the intimate connection between social and religious life in Ancestrolatry. Forgetfulness in fulfilling duties towards the gods (p. 426), and killing green snakes (p. 384) are also religious taboos.

●195 784 6) I include in a sixth category the *language taboos*, ku ruketela, viz., the use of obscene expressions not allowed in ordinary life.

(1) The *luma* taboos are social and religious; but they also belong to the first variety of physiological taboos in so far as they are actuated by the fear of defilement (food of a deceased person, Vol. I. p. 146) ; to the second variety in so far as they are connected with a change of condition : first use of a new crop (I. p. 394), of a new meat (p. 71), of a new implement (p. 117), or fishing trap (p. 85). (Notice the relation between khangula , to inaugurate, and luma).

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

The words designating the sexual act and the various parts of the genital organs are *yila*; but there are substitutes for them, euphemisms which may be used in their stead. When a child employs such words, people scold him, and say to him : "Psa yila! Do you think we are cleaning the wells?" This remark is due to the fact that the language taboos are suspended during the marginal periods and especially during the "mourning of the land," when the rains are delayed and people try to cause them to fall by the rite of cleaning the wells (p. 318). The language taboos are related to the social taboos ; to use obscene words leads to the destruction of social order, and this is allowed only when that order is actually destroyed, for instance during the mbelele rite (p. 318), during the time of moving the village (I. p. 321), and during mourning ceremonies (I. p. 160).

These six categories, although they are not absolutely distinct, form a convenient method of classifying the taboos.

II. *Some remarks on the taboos.*

1) What is the *origin of taboos*? It is not impossible to trace it in a number of cases. The *hlonipha taboos*, for instance, are proclaimed by the chiefs under certain special circumstances (I. p. 384). The taboo concerning *the planting of new fruit trees* is explained by the coincidence of the desolation of a ruined village with the presence of such trees (p. 29). Such coincidences, amounting to bad omens, have no doubt given birth to numerous taboos. If misfortune has followed a certain act two or three times, a hasty generalisation is made by the primitive mind : post hoc ergo propter hoc! So the act is tabooed.

This is due to the fact that with primitive people, as with children, *the emotional element predominates over the rational*, and when unfortunate events have happened or are feared, disease, drought, death, when the mind is in a state of terror, anxiety, or merely of nervous expectation, the reasoning faculties are disturbed, and a distinctive mental phenomenon shows itself, called by the French philosopher Renouvier the *intellectual vertigo* (le